

# Veteran Stories:

## Stanley Grizzle

### Army



Stanley Grizzle's Medals

## Transcript

My name is Stanley G. Grizzle. And I was put into the Medical Corps. And the reason I qualified for Medical Corps because as a sleeping car porter, I can make a bed. In 1942 the Canadian government decided to bring in conscription. That means compulsory service. But I got the notice to report. Now I didn't volunteer because of the social conditions as they affected myself and my people. We couldn't get jobs here. The only job a black person could get was on the railroad as a porter, for a man. And for a woman, domestic. You could walk up and down Yonge Street, you never saw a black person working in a restaurant or any of the stores. That's just the way it was. And so, there was no motivation for a black person to get into the army. One of

its themes was "to save the world for democracy." Well, we weren't enjoying any democracy in peacetime, so I couldn't see too much reason to join the army. Anyhow I got this notice and I decided that I'd better answer the service. I thought about not reporting. There's so few blacks in Canada and I'd be like a fly in a glass of milk. But I reported for service. And we were all so scared that we were very nice to each other.

As a matter of fact, at Newmarket I saw my first black officer. Sergeant-Major Shepherd. I think he was from the Guelph area. So I went to Newmarket and I think I was there for just a few months. And of course we had to... the military service get up every morning and go out for drill and learn what army life was all about. And then from Camp Borden, we were shipped out to British Columbia. While in BC, I asked for a leave to get married. So I was on a two-week leave, which would be our last leave before leaving Canada we were told. So I caught the train back to Toronto and we got married in Hamilton. And of course, I was refused hotel accommodation at the Ford Hotel at Dundas and Bay. And at the Royal York. I believe the strategy was to stay at the hotel on the south west corner of York Street and Front because it was right across from the railway station. So it'd be easier to catch the train the morning after marriage and catch the train back to British Columbia. But, that was not to be and so we stayed with my wife's sister and her husband up at Toronto here. I went back to British Columbia and the sergeant met the train and says, "Stan, got bad news for you. We're being transferred to Valcartier, Quebec." And I thought, "Oh my god, here we.... my wife and I..." And I had just able to get a room for her in a farmhouse. Mr. and Mrs. Bedore. I'll never forget the name. They were so nice.

A couple of days later, all the soldiers got aboard the train and I had to leave my wife behind. During the trip one of the officers said, "What happened to your wife?" I said, "Well, she's back at the camp, at the farmhouse." And he was very upset. He said, "My god," he said, "we never thought about it. We might have been able to arrange for her to come on the train." Anyhow that's the way it was. So we got to Valcartier,

Quebec. When we got there, my friend, Mel Evans, said, "Look Stan," he said, 'Your wife and my wife, it'd be a good idea if they got together and came down.'" And so he... he says, "I'll make the arrangements for the rooms for your wife and my wife." Separate rooms. And he did that and then when the pulled in and we met the girls at the station, here in Quebec City and off to the Salvation Army and presented ourselves for our rooms and the woman looked at Mel and his wife and said, "We can accommodate you but we don't accommodate coloured people." Well, my goodness, I couldn't believe it. Said, "Not again."